

2 November 1972

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MEMORANDUM FOR:

SUBJECT: Archives Philosophy

Chuck:

As we have discussed, your initial priority project is to develop an archival system and put it into practice within the Agency. To assist you in this task, you will be receiving training with the Chief of the Agency Archives and at the National Archives. The latter will be on a detailed basis for such time as is necessary. At a later time this month, you and I will attempt to formulate a shopping list for this training process.

I think it is important that we begin the task of establishing an Agency Archives by defining the need for those Archives. The system should be built to serve our unique requirements -- unique in the sense that CIA archives will probably never serve the public in the same fashion or depth that the National Archives does. It seems to me at first blush that we end up with an archives system which carefully selects only the cream of the crop, which may distill much other pertinent information in the form of the Agency histories, but which is extremely selective in what is permanently retained.

I was very struck by Dr. Alldredge's definition of "archives" as he viewed them. Applying this to the Agency, I could see us saving the basic decisions on the shape of the Agency and how it functions, the important documents of our Directors, and, probably, of the Deputy Directors for each Directorate. Frankly, I don't see us saving much below that level except as it reflects the action and decisions of an important event. I guess this implies a screening process to take place after the sands of time enable us to evaluate

opines that bulk of significant records held by lower echelons will be large. Directorate-level files are severely limited in scope.

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Screening?
By component
RMO?
By Directorate
Archivist?
By Archives
staff?
By Historians?
By operating
officers in
connection
with annual
report?
Combination
of methods?

what has been significant and what has not. Perhaps some examples would be useful to convey the flavor of my thoughts. We are currently defining as archival material all NPIC film. I do not believe this material is truly archival. There is a tremendous redundancy of information, not all of which is important. I would propose that we formulate an archival policy relative to this specific product which would keep only significant film; the first mission of a new technical collection methodology, either vehicle, or camera, or film; significant finds which have been important to our national security, but, please, not the movement of every single tank in the Russian armed forces, and not the deployment of every MR ~~TM~~ they have ever built; not the photography of a wheat field which formerly housed a mobile rocket battery. The same thoughts would be applied to the CS. Let's not keep every piddling operational case we have had in some minor power whose influence upon our national security is minimal. I am not suggesting we cover only successes. I am suggesting that we apply the test of significance to those items which we do cover.

Yes! Otherwise storage creates tremendous problem. Length of retention should be determined by operational requirements of GPC, IAS, etc. etc. [] still feels that NARS concurrence is necessary - submission of IIS, etc.

Obviously, a lot of time and thought will have to go into your undertaking. I can only reiterate that I believe it is best if we begin with the thought in mind that we will design a system for our specific purposes rather than blindly follow the dictates of National Archives.

Archivist

cc:
Chief, Agency Archives

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